DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 773 FL 015 394

AUTHOR Giauque, Gerald S.
TITLE How to Increase Student Participation in a Foreign Language Reading Class.
PUB DATE Mar 85
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Assignments; Classroom Communication; *Classroom Techniques; *Individualized Instruction; Reading Instruction; Second Language Instruction; *Student Participation; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS *Error Correction (Language)

ABSTRACT

A technique for increasing student interest and participation which provides some of the benefits of individualized instruction includes daily homework assignments and short daily compositions. The daily homework assignments are only looked over, not corrected or graded. For the short daily compositions (three sentences for first-year classes, and five sentences for others) topics are suggested but not required. The topics reflect current classroom material or are intended to get students to express their psychological needs. At first, the compositions are only read and commented on encouragingly, not corrected. As students increase the composition length and introduce creativity, some correction begins. At the end of the first year, student errors are circled and discussed briefly with the individual students. As reading assignments are begun, students are given brief questionnaires on which they are expected to tell honestly whether they have read and comprehended the assignments. The teacher does not waste class time calling on students who are only partially prepared. The essence of the technique is to take time for each student who is prepared, encouraging and rewarding positive behavior. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gerald S. Giauque
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED263773

HOW TO INCREASE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING CLASS

Gerald S. Giauque

In recent years, there has been a decline among teachers of foreign languages in individualized instruction. This is the result primarily of the great deal of effort required to implement and run this method. One must admit, however, that there are many advantages associated with Individualized Instruction, and that efforts to incorporate it into oiur teaching today, even if in a modified fashion, might be extremely worthwhile. This paper is a description of several activities I have developed which produce many of the benefits of an Individualized Instruction program, but which require far less time and effort to implement than do most Individualized Instruction programs.

I give homework to all of my classes every day. Each assignment consists of approximately one and one-half to two pages of hand-written material, that is, of the front and back of one piece of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. The great majority of this homework consists in writing the answers to questions and exercises in the textbook. I do not correct this homework. I do glance at it however, to be sure that it has been completed. Because I do feel that homework is important as a learning technique (not just busywork), I have provided answers to all the exercises and questions of the book. It is my intent that the students consult these answers. I do not have the time to correct each student's homework; in addition, the student learns more if he has to put forth some effort on his own to discover if he has completed his homework correctly. Some students, no doubt, consult the answers before writing the homework. But I do not consider this as great a "sin" as failing

FL015394

to do the homework at all. Those who DO copy the answers receive more exposure to the material than if they did not do the homework at all, so I choose to allow those students who wish to "cheat" to do so. I do not give a grade for homework, but I DO note if the homework is not turned in, or if it is handed in late. I spend a minimum of time each afternoon marking in my rollbook the names of those who fail to turn in their homework. I find a very high correlation between regular homework, regular attendance and test scores, and thus am able to use homework and attendance statistics as validators of test scores.

However, in addition to exercises taken from the textbook, each student is also assigned a very short composition each day. This composition consists of only three sentences in my first year classes, and five in my second and third year classes. A topic is suggested for each composition, but the student is not required to write on that topic. Usually the topic reflects material under consideration at the time the composition is assigned; i.e., when studying the passé composé, I might make the following assignment: "What did you do last weekend?" In connection with the imperfect, "What did you do on Sundays when you were a child?" Sometimes, I assign topics intended to get students to express their psychological needs: "Write three sentences on any frustrations you might be having with the university." "How do you feel about the usefulness of the classes you are now taking?" etc.

These small compositions constitute "real communication." I value them, for they provide a tenuous but significant opportunity for individualized interaction with each student. During the first part of the year, I correct these compositions very little. Rather, I write very encouraging comments about them, responding positively as much as possible. Usually this requires only a couple of words: "Bien." "Je vous comprends." "Magnifique." "Je

regrette aussi." "Excellent." As the semester and year progress, I find that I have established, via this short "letter" a special relationship with each student. I come to know each one through his writing. I am able to respond to certain needs because I have learned what those needs are. In addition, of course, these short letters provide an outlet for student creativity. Many students soon begin increasing from three sentences to five, seven, even more, they stop counting sentences and write to communicate, regardless of the number of sentences it takes to say what they want to say. When that happens, the class really begins to progress in oral production too.

When I begin to note some creativity in the students' use of the language, I begin correcting it. I don't correct everything, but I start noting subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, etc. These letters soon begin to provide me not only with feedback concerning the students' psychology, but also with information which tells me what grammatical points require reviewing. I can then tailor each class as needed to help students eliminate grammatical problems.

During the last third of the year of the first year class, I introduce another element into this process. As students become more adept in their ability, not only to use the target language, but also in their ability to use the textbook profitably, I am able to spend part of the classroom hour talking briefly with students individually, one-on-one. Rather than correcting errors in the three-line compositions, I merely circle them. I inform the students that I expect them to try to make the corrections themselves. The next day, I invite each student with errors on his paper to come to my desk, one at a time, and we chat. If the student has repaired the errors, this interview may be very brief. If not, we try to clear up the problem once again, this helps me appreciate each student for what he is and also helps him feel that I know him as an individual and am able to respond to his needs.

In second and third year, I have instituted a technique to encourage preparation of reading assignments in such a way that I am able to determine how well each student is prepared, merely by glancing at a piece of paper. I emphasize that all I have to do is glance. I used this technique most recently in connection with an extended reading assignment of l'Alouette, by Jean Anouilh. Following is the form which each student receives, fills out and hands in at the beginning of the next class period.

NOM _____ DATE _____

( ) 1. Je ne comprends pas la question.

( ) 2. Je comprends la question, mais je n'ai pas lu l'Alouette.

( ) 3. Je comprends la question, mais je ne me rappelle pas la response.

( ) 4. _____

I copy this form so that ten of them appear on a ditto-ed page. Then I am able to ask the student ten questions. However, this procedure can use up a lot of paper in a week's time, so during the second week, I reduce the form so that it appears as follows:

NOM _____ DATE _____

( ) 1. Je ne comprends pas.	( ) 1. Je ne comprends pas.
( ) 2. Je n'ai pas lu l'Alouette.	( ) 2. Je n'ai pas lu l'Alouette.
( ) 3. Je ne me rappelle pas.	( ) 3. Je ne me rappelle pas.
( ) 4. _____	( ) 4. _____

This form works well enough for about two weeks, but then even it gets old. So finally I use an even more abbreviated form, which looks like this;

NOM _____ DATE _____

#1. ____ #2. ____ #3. ____ #4. ____ #5. ____ #6. ____ #7. ____

I ask the question orally. The student then writes a number, between 1 and 5. S/he writes 5 if s/he is very sure of the answer, and 1 if s/he does not know the answer at all. If s/he is somewhat hesitant about the answer, s/he is questioned again. But I call on only those people who have indicated 5 on their answer sheet. That way I don't have to wait and wait for people who are not really prepared to try to answer a question for which they do not know the answer.

Class discussion is important, but a teacher can waste a great deal of time calling upon students who are only partially prepared. With the above form in hand, I can determine who has read the material and call only on those students who indicate they are prepared. I keep the papers and note in my rollbook those who are not prepared and enter this information into my grading procedure. Gone are the days of trying to pry a discussion out of students who have made the effort to come to class, but have not made the effort to prepare.

The essence of the above-mentioned procedures is "take time for each student, IF he is prepared." It is not necessary to take a lot of time correcting homework or trying to get students to talk, if they don't want to talk, or have done only part of the homework. I work only with those students who demonstrate a high enough degree of interest in the class to complete the assignment I give. These individuals have demonstrated they are serious, and

I reward them by giving them my attention (and high grades). Those who do not do the assignment, or do it only partially, do not receive individualized attention. It is true that they may need it more than those who HAVE progressed; but I choose to reward for positive behavior, rather than negative behavior. The results have been most gratifying. In time, the slothful ones either remain slothful, or else begin to crave attention also. If the latter is the case, I encourage them to complete the assignments, and then claim their reward. If they choose not to participate in "individualized instruction," they have that right. As a result of implementing these procedures, my blood pressure has gone down and teaching has become fun once again.